

# *You Are Not Alone*

*A CAREGIVER'S RESOURCE GUIDE TO RAISING CHILDREN IN MICHIGAN*



## RELATIVES RAISING RELATIVES' CHILDREN



MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

KINSHIP CARE  
RESOURCE CENTER

*Strengthening Families ♦ Spanning Generations*

# *What is kinship care?*

Kinship care is defined as the provision of full-time nurturing and protection of children by adults other than parents who have a family relationship bond with the children.

*—Child Welfare League of America, 1994*

There are two types of kinship care arrangements:

## *Informal care*

In an informal arrangement, family members become caregivers for relative children without the involvement of the court or a social service agency.

## *Formal care*

Formal arrangements are made through the courts, in some cases with the assistance of an agency, such as Child Protective Services, which may maintain limited contact with the kinship caregivers over time.



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## Mission Statement

## RELATIVES RAISING RELATIVES' CHILDREN

The mission of the Kinship Care Resource Center, which is part of the School of Social Work at Michigan State University, is to provide support for the physical, emotional, cultural, and social well-being of kinship families in the state of Michigan. This mission will be accomplished by:

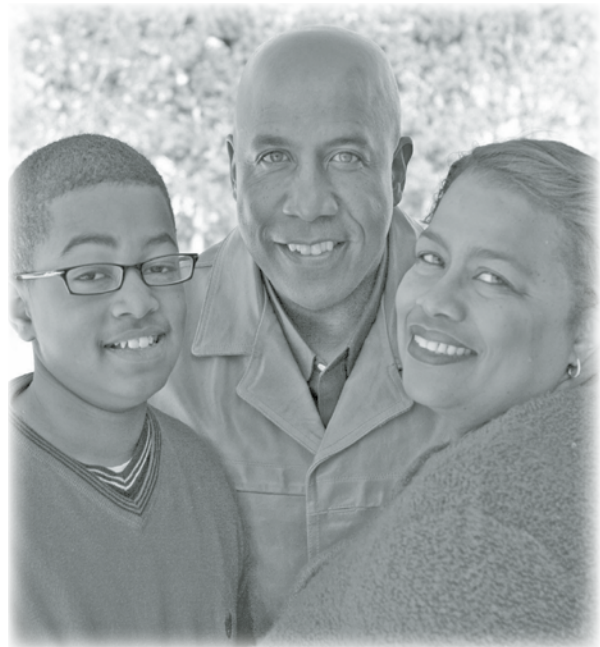
- ◆ Linking families to community resources;
- ◆ Providing kinship care related technical support and consultation to agencies;
- ◆ Developing innovative, community-based research projects; and
- ◆ Educating service providers, legislators, policy makers and community leaders about the needs of kinship families.

# *Introduction to Kinship Care*

**According to the 2000 U.S. Census, in Michigan there were 183,621 children living with relatives; 70,044 grandparents reported being responsible for their grandchildren.**

**K**inship families form as a result of biological parents being unable to care for their children due to factors such as death, child abuse and neglect, incarceration, mental and physical illness, unplanned pregnancy, AIDS, and military leave. Typically, kinship caregivers include grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, other relatives, and close friends of the family. Many of these caregivers provide permanency and safety by preventing children from entering into institutional care such as foster care. However, many live below the poverty line and need support for the additional children in their care. Because increasing numbers of relatives are raising children, it is important to take into account the availability of resources to provide for the legal, financial, nutritional, medical, educational and emotional needs of children and families.

The information in this guide is a starting point for identifying resources for relatives providing kinship care. Government agencies and offices are often listed in the blue pages in the phone book. Many community phone books also have separate sections that list family services, charitable organizations or an information and referral service to call for information. Your local library and the Internet are additional resources for information. Schools, day care providers, community health clinics and pediatrician offices may also be of assistance.



The task you have undertaken as a caregiver is a challenging but rewarding one. Do not be afraid to ask for assistance from family members and friends. Remember that your health and well-being are important to the child's future. As you care for the child, take care of yourself and do not forget...you are not alone.

If you would like additional information on any of these topics or other support services, please contact the Kinship Care Resource Center at **1 (800) 535-1218**, email at **[kinship@msu.edu](mailto:kinship@msu.edu)**, or visit us on the web at **[www.kinship.msu.edu](http://www.kinship.msu.edu)**.



# Legal Terms and Resources

**All kinship care providers have certain rights and benefits, but depending on the nature of the family's circumstances, the term kinship care has many different meanings. Below we explain some of the different legal options.**

## Informal Kinship

Informal kinship care includes relatives who take care of other family members' children without a formal, legal arrangement. In this situation, the parents maintain legal custody and rights of the children, regardless of the parents' level of emotional or financial contribution.

## Power of Attorney

By signing a Power of Attorney, parents can legally grant relatives the authority to raise the children as the relatives' own without the involvement of an attorney. This is a form of informal care that gives relatives the ability to make specific decisions that may directly affect the children, such as seeking medical attention. For Power of Attorney forms, please contact the center.

## Limited Guardianship

Within the arrangements of a limited guardianship, parents and relatives work together to create temporary legal arrangements for the children. In a court hearing, parents can consent to give up their parental rights for a specified time frame, or until certain conditions are met. Within these parameters, rights are awarded to the chosen relatives to make decisions for the children. However, all decisions must be consistent with the awarded rights stated in the temporary legal contract.

## Full/Permanent Guardianship

Full/permanent guardianship can be granted to kinship caregivers if they have informally raised their relatives' children for a period of time or if the parents are no longer able to care for their children. To acquire full/permanent guardianship, kinship caregivers must file a case in a court that has jurisdiction over guardianship matters. In Michigan, this is the Probate Court. If the kinship caregiver can show proof of a fixed income or receipt of public aid, courts fees and costs can be waived.

## Custody

Custody is the result of obtaining legal rights and responsibility for a child through a Family Court. This is a long-term agreement, lasting until the child is 18 years of age unless the court determines the custody should be changed. Change of custody requires a formal hearing in the court. Kinship caregivers can gain custody of their relatives' children when:

- Parents sign a contract that gives the caregiver legal custody.
- OR
- A court gives the caregiver custody during a court hearing.

## Legal Terms and Resources – continued



### Kinship Foster Care

In situations where the court has removed a child or children from their home, the kinship caregivers of those children may choose to become licensed foster care parents for the children in their care. As licensed foster parents, kinship caregivers may choose to limit their foster home license to just the children in their care; they do not have to take in additional foster children. If eligibility requirements are met, the state will provide health care and financial aid for the children, and a foster care worker from the Department of Human Services will help to ensure the well-being of the children. Caregivers can get assistance with the foster care process from their local Department of Human Services. Licensed foster care providers receive financial assistance from the Department of Human Services. More detailed information on this topic is available in the Financial Resources section of this guide.

### Adoption

Adoption is the process of gaining permanent legal custody of a child. Caregivers can adopt children when:

- Parents willingly give consent to the adoption of their child by a relative.
- OR
- The Family Court has terminated the rights of the parents, and the court finds that the adoption by the caregiver is in the child's best interest.

Kinship caregivers can get assistance with the adoption process from their local Department of Human Services. Caregivers who adopt relative children may be eligible to receive an adoption subsidy through the Department of Human Services. More detailed information on this subsidy is available in the Financial Resources section of this guide.

## Legal Terms and Resources – continued

### Where to Find Legal Help

Affordable legal services and consultation are available for kinship caregivers. The organizations listed here may provide free consultation or reduced-cost legal services such as:

*Assistance with legal options available to you as a kinship caregiver*

**Chance At Childhood**

(517) 432-8406

[www.chanceatchildhood.msu.edu](http://www.chanceatchildhood.msu.edu)



*Free phone consultation for seniors 60 and over*

**Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors**

(800) 347-5297

*Mediation services for kinship families*

**Dispute Resolution Education Resources**

(517) 485-2274

[www.michiganresolution.org](http://www.michiganresolution.org)

*Estate planning*

**Bernick, Omer, Radner & Ouellette, P.C.**

(517) 371-5361

[www.elderlawanswers.com](http://www.elderlawanswers.com)

*Referral for a private attorney*

**The Michigan Bar Association**

(800) 968-0738

[www.michbar.org](http://www.michbar.org)

*Help caring for a child with developmental disability or mental illness*

**Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service**

(800) 414-3956

[www.mpas.org](http://www.mpas.org)

*Information about grandparent visitation rights*

**National Non-profit Grandparents Rights Organization**

(248) 646-7177

[www.grandparentsrights.org/victor.htm](http://www.grandparentsrights.org/victor.htm)

*File a complaint on services or staff working in the protective services, foster care or adoption services of the Department of Human Services*

**The Children's Ombudsman**

(800) 624-4326 or (517) 373-3077

[www.michigan.gov/oco](http://www.michigan.gov/oco)



# Financial Resources

Financial resources can be an important aid to help kinship caregivers meet the daily requirements of the children who depend on them. Such resources and programs are described below. Please note: The Department of Human Services (DHS) oversees the majority of the financial resources available to kinship caregivers for children. Please contact your local DHS for applications.

## Family Independence Program (FIP)

FIP provides financial assistance to families who need support with day care and other services. FIP money can take two forms: **Ineligible Grantee Awards** or **Eligible Grantee Awards**, which are explained below. Contact your local Department of Human Services for more information on either of these awards.

### ***Ineligible Grantee Awards***

Ineligible grantee refers to the head of household who is applying for benefits only on behalf of the children in the household. Ineligible grantee awards are also called ***Child Only Grants***.

To receive the Ineligible Grantee Award on behalf of a relative child, you must show:

- The child is under the age of 18.
- The child has no parental involvement or support because the parents are absent from the home, unable to work, cannot find a job or are deceased.
- The child's income does not exceed eligibility standards.
- The child lives with a caretaker relative.

When applying for the Child Only Grants, the child's income and assets are the main items used for consideration. However,

the child must be living with the caregiver. Legal custody of the child is not required, and children approved for Child Only Grants are automatically eligible for Medicaid. Caregivers with guardianship of the children in their care are eligible for the Child Only Grant.

### ***Eligible Grantee Awards***

Eligible grantee refers to the head of household who is applying for services for themselves or for the child in the household. Eligible Grantee Awards are also called Family Grants. Eligibility is based on the income and assets of all family members. To remain eligible for FIP benefits, kinship caregivers must be able to work as a means of showing independence, unless they can prove that they are disabled or over 65 years of age.



## Financial Resources – continued

### Child Support

To access child support, a kinship caregiver can file with their local Friend of the Court office. Depending on the income of the parents, a court can order the parents to pay child support and health insurance for the child. In most cases, if a family is receiving FIP money, the amount of FIP money will be reduced by the amount of child support collected.

If a child is receiving child support from his/her parents and also receives the Ineligible Grantee Award, then the child will continue to receive the Ineligible Grantee Award, but the Child Support money will go directly to the state and not to the child. In cases where the amount of child support collected is greater than the amount of Ineligible Grantee Award, the caregiver may want to discontinue their Ineligible Grantee Award and just receive the Child Support money. To access child support, a caregiver should call their local Friend of the Court office.

### Kinship Foster Care

If licensed as kinship foster care providers, kinship caregivers can obtain financial aid through the Department of Human Services. For a kinship caregiver to be eligible to become licensed foster parents, the relative child must have been placed in their home by Child Protective Services.

The home of the kinship caregiver will be inspected for health conditions, space and safety regulations. If the kinship caregiver



passes each inspection and is licensed, the financial aid package they receive will include:

- Medicaid.
- Subsidized child care.
- Respite care.
- Foster care payments range between \$200-\$500 per month.

If a kinship caregiver decides to become a licensed foster parent, a foster care worker will be assigned to the family. Other services will then be made available to the family, including counseling, support groups and referral services. As licensed foster parents, kinship caregivers may choose to limit their foster home license to just the children in their care; they do not have to take in additional foster children.

### Adoption Assistance

If a kinship caregiver has adopted a child, the child may be eligible to receive an adoption subsidy. The amount of the subsidy may be more for special needs children and children who once were in foster care. Your local Department of Human Services can assist caregivers with the adoption process.

## Financial Resources – continued

### Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSI can be a source of financial assistance for kinship families. Persons receiving SSI are also eligible to receive Medicaid. Kinship caregivers can receive SSI if:

- The caregiver is low income and age 65 or older.

OR

- Any family member is blind or disabled (physically or mentally).

To apply for SSI, contact your local Social Security Office, **(800) 772-1213**, or local Department of Human Services.

### Social Security Benefits

Social Security Benefits provide financial assistance for a grandchild based on a parent's, step-parent's or grandparent's history of Social Security earning. Contact your local Social Security Office, **(800) 772-1213**, or your local Department of Human Services.



### State Emergency Relief (SER)

The SER program assists applicants with safe, decent, affordable housing, and other essential needs when an emergency situation arises. Eligibility is determined based in part on income and assets. SER services are for persons physically present in Michigan. Services provided include:

- Energy services: heat and electric costs.
- Utility services: water, sewage, and cooking gas.
- Burials: burial, cremation, or costs of donating a body to a medical school.
- Home ownership and home repairs: house payments, property taxes, and mobile home lot rent.
- Insurance coverage required by a mortgage.
- Energy-related home repairs, non-energy related home repairs.
- Relocation services: rent, security deposits, moving expenses and household contents in the event of a fire, civil disorder, or natural/chemical disaster; or to prevent children from being removed from the home or to allow children to return to the home.

Contact your local Department of Human Services for more information.

# Food and Nutrition Programs

**Food and nutrition programs exist to assist caregivers in meeting the daily requirements of the children who depend on them. Such resources and programs are described below.**

## **Women, Infants & Children (WIC)**

The WIC program provides food and health care to children under age 5 and pregnant or postpartum women. To be eligible for the WIC program, a kinship caregiver must live in the state in which they are applying and must be able to prove their need by showing evidence that their child may be at-risk for poor nutrition or health. WIC services include:

- WIC food coupons that allow families to purchase food at authorized stores.
- Educational seminars on how to provide nutritious meals for children.
- Referral services to other health and social services, such as Medicaid, food stamps, prenatal care, immunization and substance abuse programs.

To apply for the WIC program, contact your local Health Department.

## **Food Stamp Program**

The food stamp program provides low income families with coupons or electronic benefit transfers (EBTs) that can be used like money to purchase food. They can be used at most grocery stores, many food co-ops, as well as some farmers' markets. Food stamps cannot be used to purchase non-food items, such as clothing, tissue or paper. EBTs are also referred to as **Bridge Cards**. The Bridge Cards are used like debit cards to purchase food. Food stamps, whether they are coupons or Bridge Cards, are issued

on a monthly basis, based on the number of people in the household, the household income and household expenses. Your county Department of Human Services can help determine if you are eligible.

## **Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch and Breakfast Program**

School districts are required to offer free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches. A child in kinship care may qualify for free or reduced-price meals as a student if the caregiver is receiving food stamps or FIP benefits for the child. For more information, families should contact the food service director in their local school district or the Michigan Department of Education's Food and Nutrition Program at **(517) 373-3347**.

## **Other Food Programs**

Many communities provide food pantries where families can go to receive non-perishable food products. This service can be helpful in stretching a family's food budget. **Local agencies providing this service include:**

- **American Red Cross**
- **Salvation Army**
- **Churches and community centers**
- **Department of Human Services**

Most of these organizations will be listed in the telephone book. For more information about other food and nutrition services, call **(800) 221-5689**.



# Health and Dental Care Programs

**The State of Michigan offers health care coverage from a number of available programs. A minor child in a relative's care may qualify. A minor child is defined as any child under age 18.**

## Medicaid

Medicaid is a state and federally funded program that pays medical bills for qualified applicants. Medicaid will pay for most regular medical services, such as:

- Physicians
- Hospitalizations
- X-rays
- Family planning
- Clinic services
- Laboratory tests
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Most prescription drugs
- Dental coverage

Eligibility for Medicaid is based on various criteria:

- Persons who are age 65 or older, blind or disabled; families with children; pregnant women and persons under the age of 21.
- Persons who have an income and/or assets at or below the appropriate income/asset limit for Medicaid category.
- Your relative child may be eligible for Medicaid if he or she meets all Medicaid eligibility requirements except for income and if medical expenses exceed a certain level.

- If your child currently receives FIP money, the Child Only Grant or the Ineligible Grantee Award, then he or she is eligible for Medicaid.
- All persons receiving SSI are eligible for Medicaid. See the section on Financial Resources in this guide for more information about SSI.

Individuals can apply for Medicaid at their county Department of Human Services.



## Health Care Programs – continued



### Healthy Kids

Healthy Kids is a free health coverage program for children under 19 years of age or for pregnant women of any age. Healthy Kids covers necessary health care, including:

- Doctor visits
- Hospital care
- Lab work
- X-rays
- Health check-ups
- Immunizations
- Transportation to the medical provider, if needed

Your county Department of Human Services can provide more information.

### MiChild

MiChild is a program for low to moderate income families with children who do not currently have insurance. Many HMOs and other health care plans provide MiChild services. MiChild covers:

- Regular check-ups
- Shots
- Emergency care
- Dental care
- Prescription drugs
- Hospital care
- Prenatal care
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Mental health and substance abuse services
- Other services

To find out more about MiChild and Healthy Kids, call the Health Department at **(888) 988-6300** or your local Department of Human Services.

### Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS)

Children and some adults with special health needs and chronic health problems may receive coverage and referrals to specialty services. Call your local Health Department at **(888) 988-6300** for details about these services.

### Immunization

Immunizations are usually provided by the local Health Department either at a reduced rate or free of charge. For a child who is enrolled in the Medicaid program, an assigned health care provider is required to provide immunizations. Contact your local Health Department at **(888) 988-6300** with questions regarding immunizations.

### Healthy Kids Dental

The Healthy Kids Dental project is a public-private partnership between the Michigan Department of Community Health and Delta Dental Plan of Michigan. It provides Medicaid dental benefits in 37 counties to children and teenagers under the age of 21. For more information, contact the Michigan Department of Community Mental Health at **(517) 335-5129** or e-mail [farrellc@michigan.gov](mailto:farrellc@michigan.gov).

### Other Health and Dental Care Programs

For additional listings of free or reduced priced health and dental health coverage, please visit [www.bcbsm.com/home/bcbsm/freeclinics.shtml](http://www.bcbsm.com/home/bcbsm/freeclinics.shtml) or call the center.

# Mental Health Services and Support Groups by County

It is important for caregivers to take care of their own emotional and physical needs so that they can take care of the children in their care. Caregivers who feel stress can talk to friends and family, take some free time for themselves, or seek counseling through a local Community Mental Health. Caregivers and children may also find comfort by attending a local support group for kinship families. Many support groups and programs for caregivers also offer support groups and activities for the children. To find a group near you, contact the Kinship Care Resource Center at **(800) 535-1218** or refer to the list of kinship support groups below.

Some children may need outside counseling to better understand their emotional issues. You can find affordable counseling for your child by contacting your local Department of Human Services, school social workers, counselors, or community mental health offices.

## Kinship Support Groups by County

When calling for a support group in your county, please ask to speak with the coordinator of the kinship care program or the grandparents raising grandchildren program.

Barry (269) 948-4865  
Berrien (877) 660-2725 or (269) 660-2725

Calhoun (269) 789-2453  
Cass (877) 660-2725  
Clinton (800) 535-1218

Eaton (517) 819-8098

Genesee (810) 232-9950  
Gladwin (989) 426-9295  
Grand Traverse (231) 929-7083 ext. 16  
or (231) 929-7070

Hillsdale (800) 479-3348  
Huron (989) 269-2369

Ionia (616) 527-4900  
Ingham (800) 535-1218

Jackson (517) 788-4364 or (800) 788-3579

Kalamazoo (269) 384-8054

Lake (231) 745-2000  
Lenawee (517) 592-8742  
Livingston (517) 592-8742

Macomb (586) 469-3615 or (586) 469-3615  
Mason (231) 757-4705 or (231) 737-1335  
Mecosta (888) 456-6135  
Midland (989) 631-5390  
Montcalm (616) 225-8572 or (888) 920-2496  
Muskegon (231) 737-1335

Newyago (888) 920-2496

Oakland (248) 830-9695 or (248) 721-0118  
Oceana (231) 757-4705  
Osceola (888) 920-2496  
Ottawa (616) 396-0623 or (231) 737-1335

Saginaw (989) 797-6884

Tuscola (989) 672-3430

Van Buren (877) 660-2725 or (269) 660-2725

Washtenaw (734) 712-3625  
Wayne (313) 933-2583 or (313) 347-2054

## *Mental Health Services and Support Groups – continued*

### **Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)**

AAAs in Michigan provide services to seniors, including grandparents raising grandchildren. Some AAAs provide kinship support groups or can refer you to a kinship support group in your area. Using the list below, you may contact your local AAA in your county.

When calling an AAA for services or a support group in your county, please ask to speak with the coordinator of the kinship care program or the grandparents raising grandchildren program.



### **Region 1-A Area Agency on Aging**

Serves cities of Detroit, Grosse Pointe (GP), GP Farms, GP Park, GP Shores, GP Woods, Hamtramck, Harper Woods, and Highland Park.

Phone: (313) 446-4444

Internet: [www.daaa1a.org](http://www.daaa1a.org)

### **Region 1-B Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw.

Phone: (248) 357-2255

Toll-free: (800) 852-7795

Internet: [www.aaa1b.com](http://www.aaa1b.com)

### **Region 1-C Area Agency on Aging**

Serves all of Wayne County excluding areas served by Region 1-A.

Phone: (734) 722-2830

Toll-free: (800) 815-1112

Internet: [www.aaa1c.org](http://www.aaa1c.org)

### **Region 2 Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Hillsdale, Jackson and Lenawee.

Phone: (517) 467-2204

Toll-free: (800) 335-7881

Internet: [www.r2aaa.org](http://www.r2aaa.org)

### **Region 3-A Area Agency on Aging**

Serves Kalamazoo County.

Phone: (269) 373-5147 or (269) 373-5153

Internet: [www.kalcounty.com/aaa/](http://www.kalcounty.com/aaa/)

### **Region 3-B Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Barry and Calhoun.

Phone: (269) 966-2450

Toll-free: (800) 626-6719

Internet: [www.burnhambrook.com](http://www.burnhambrook.com)



## ***Mental Health Services... – continued***



### **Region 3-C Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Branch and St. Joseph.

Phone: (517) 279-9561

Toll-free: (888) 615-8009

Internet: [www.bhsj.org/AAA/](http://www.bhsj.org/AAA/)

### **Region 4 Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren.

Phone (269) 983-0177

Toll-free: (800) 654-2810 (Sr. Inf. Line)

Internet: [www.areaagencyonaging.org](http://www.areaagencyonaging.org)

### **Valley Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Genesee, Lapeer, and Shiawassee.

Phone: (810) 239-7671

Toll-free: (800) 978-6275

Internet: [www.gfn.org/vaaa](http://www.gfn.org/vaaa)

### **Tri-County Office on Aging**

Serves counties of Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham.

Phone: (517) 887-1440

Toll-free: (800) 405-9141

Internet: [www.tcoa.org](http://www.tcoa.org)

### **Region 7 Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac, and Tuscola.

Phone: (989) 893-4506

Toll-free: (800) 858-1637

Internet: [www.region7aaa.org](http://www.region7aaa.org)

### **Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan**

Serves counties of Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo, and Osceola.

Phone: (616) 456-5664

Toll-free: (888) 456-6135

Internet: [www.aaawm.org](http://www.aaawm.org)

### **Region 9 Area Agency on Aging**

Serves counties of Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, and Roscommon.

Phone: (989) 356-3474

Internet: [www.nemcsa.org](http://www.nemcsa.org)

### **Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Michigan**

Serves counties of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.

Phone: (231) 947-8920

Toll-free: (800) 442-1713

Internet: [www.aaanm.org](http://www.aaanm.org)

### **U.P. Area Agency on Aging UCAP Services, Inc.**

Serves counties of Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, and Schoolcraft.

Phone: (906) 786-4701

Toll-free: (800) 338-7227

Internet: [www.upcapservices.com](http://www.upcapservices.com)

### **Senior Resources**

Serves counties of Muskegon, Oceana, and Ottawa.

Phone: (231) 739-5858

Toll-free: (800) 442-0054

Internet: [www.SeniorResources.us](http://www.SeniorResources.us)

# Educational Resources

**T**o enroll a child in a Michigan public school, you will need the child's birth certificate, proof of current immunizations and documentation showing school district residency, such as a driver's license, voter registration, utility bill or other document imprinted with your street address. Documentation to enroll your child in school can be obtained from your local Health Department, as well as your county Department of Human Services.

If your child shows signs of any academic, behavioral or emotional issues, your school counselor, school social worker or principal may be helpful in identifying services both inside and outside the school to assist. For additional information, please visit the Michigan Department of Education website at [www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) or call (517) 373-3324.

For information about college scholarships, please visit [www.michigan.gov/osg](http://www.michigan.gov/osg) and/or contact the center for brochures.



Schools can also help with food and nutrition needs of children. See the Food and Nutrition Programs section of this guide for more information on free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches provided by schools.

## Early On

The Early On program provides early intervention services for families with children between the ages of birth to 36 months who are not developing physically, socially or emotionally at the same rate as other children. There is no charge to families for an evaluation. Call (800) 327-5966 for more information.

## Michigan School Readiness

Michigan School Readiness is a program for 4-year-old children who have been identified as from low income families or at-risk for school failure. This program was implemented to promote school readiness and provide children with a great start. Contact your local public school for more information.

## Early Head Start

The Early Head Start program provides comprehensive services to support the development of healthy infants, toddlers and pregnant women. Contact your local Head Start Office or local school for details about this program.

## Head Start

Head Start is an educational program for children between ages 3 and 5. The goal of Head Start is to prepare children socially,

## Educational Resources – continued

intellectually, physically and emotionally for their entrance into kindergarten. The Head Start program encourages caregiver involvement. Participation in classes and staff visits to the home allow caregivers to learn more about their children's needs and to be more aware of educational activities that can take place in the home. You can apply for Head Start for your child by contacting the public school your child will attend. If the school in your area does not have a Head Start program, contact the Head Start office at **(517) 482-1504**.

### Even Start

Even Start provides adult literacy education, early childhood education and parent/child education. To be eligible, families must have a child from the ages of birth to age 7 and a parent/guardian who is eligible for adult basic education or who is functionally illiterate. Participation is free of charge. Contact your local public school for more information.

### McKinney-Vento Services

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ensures the educational stability of homeless children. A liaison is assigned to the child and family and works to provide transportation to school, school supplies, and other identified needs. Some children in kinship care arrangements may be temporarily homeless during transition and removal from their biological parents' home and may qualify for educational assistance. For more information, contact your local Intermediate School District (ISD) and/or the Michigan Department of Education at **(517) 373-3324**. Services vary by county.



### Special Education Services

You have a right to request your child be tested for special needs. Many children have academic, behavioral and/or emotional issues that make it hard for them to do their best at school. These children may have special education needs the school can help the child overcome. If you would like your child tested for special needs, contact your school principal or school social worker. They may ask you to put your request in writing. If you would like help with this process, you may contact CAUSE (Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education) at **(800) 221-9105** or ask for help from the Michigan Department of Education at **(517) 373-3324**.

### Special Note

If you are denied benefits from your county Department of Human Services office and you feel that you have been treated unfairly or wrongfully denied these benefits, it is your right to request a hearing to discuss the denial of your benefits. This information should be stated in any denial letter that you receive. If you feel you have been wrongfully denied, follow the directions in your denial letter and contact your local county Department of Human Services to ask for a hearing and/or contact the Children's Ombudsman **(800) 624-4326** or **(517) 373-3077** to file a complaint.

# Kinship Legislation

## Kinship Bills 2008

The following bills related to kinship care were introduced during the 2007-2008 Michigan Legislative Session. For an update on these bills, please contact the Kinship Care Resource Center.

**SB 170** (Senator Clark-Coleman)

This bill establishes the relative guardianship assistance act.

**SB 171** (Senator Clark-Coleman)

This bill requires the same level of support for relative caregivers as foster care parents.

**SB 172** (Senator Clark-Coleman)

This bill prohibits the removal of a child under a relative's care as they are applying for a foster care license.

**SB 668-672**

These bills address permanency for children.

**HB 4735** (Representative Polidori)

This bill codifies the current policies of the Department of Human Services which states that placements with relatives be considered a first priority for children that must be removed from their birth parents.

**HB 4736** (Representative Byrum)

This bill would revise the procedure for placement of children in a foster home to give special consideration to families of the same religious background.

**HB 4737** (Representative Dean)

This bill would implement through formal court proceedings the requirement of parental disclosure of relatives when placing a child in a home other than that of a parent.

## Grandparents Visitation Law

### What is the Grandparents Visitation Law?

Passed in 2004, the Grandparents Visitation Law allows grandparents in the State of Michigan to request assistance from the courts to see their grandchildren if they have been denied visitation by a parent: The situations below describe circumstances when a grandparent has the right to file for visitation rights.

- The child's parent has died.
- If there has been a divorce or annulment,

or if one is pending, between the child's parents.

- Custody of the child has been given to someone other than the child's parent or the child doesn't live in the parent's home.
- The child was born out of wedlock and the parents aren't living. This only applies to grandparents of the alleged father when the court legally declares him to be the father of the child and the father pays child support for the child.
- The grandparent has taken care of the child during the year before they request visitation.



## Kinship Legislation • Grandparents Visitation Law – *continued*

### How do I file for grandparent visitation rights?

Grandparent visitation rights can be filed in the circuit court under the family division in the county where the grandchild lives. A notice of the grandparent visitation request must be given to custodial parents and any person who has parenting time with the child.

### What happens during a grandparent visitation hearing?

During the hearing in the circuit court:

- The court will assume that a “fit” parent’s decision to deny the grandparents a chance to visit the child **does not** create mental, physical, or emotional harm to the child.
- It is the grandparent’s responsibility to show the court that the majority of evidence shows that the parent’s decision to deny the grandparents a chance to visit the child **does** create mental, physical, or emotional harm to the child. If the grandparent fails to do this, the request will be dismissed.
- If the court believes preventing the grandparents from visiting the child potentially will harm the child, then the court will determine what amount of visitation will be in the child’s best interest.

### What factors do the court use to determine the number of grandparent visitation?

- The loving relationship between the child and the grandparent.
- The length and quality of the relationship between the child and grandparent, and the role performed by the grandparent.

- The grandparent’s moral fitness.
- The grandparent’s mental and physical health.
- If the child is old enough to express a preference, then the child’s reasonable preference will be considered.
- If or how hostility between the parent and grandparent has affected the child.
- How willing the grandparent is to encourage a loving relationship between the child and the child’s parents, except when abuse or neglect is present.
- Any history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect of the child by the grandparent.
- If the parent’s decision to deny the grandparent visitation is related to the child’s well-being.
- Any other factor related to the child’s physical and psychological well-being.

### Agreement of Two Fit Parents to Deny Visitation

If two fit parents sign an affidavit to oppose a grandparent visitation request, then the court will dismiss a grandparent’s request for visitation. This does not include stepparents.

### Attorney Fees

The court may set reasonable attorney fees for either the parent or grandparent depending on the case.

For more information regarding the Grandparent Visitation Law, contact the National Non-Profit Grandparents Rights Organization at **(248) 646-7177** or visit **[www.grandparentsrights.org/victor.htm](http://www.grandparentsrights.org/victor.htm)** and/or contact the Kinship Care Resource Center at **(800) 535-1218** or by e-mail at **[kinship@msu.edu](mailto:kinship@msu.edu)**.

Working with legislators can sometimes be intimidating and overwhelming. Below are seven practical steps to gain support from your state legislators.

## Speaking with Your Legislator

**1** Know the current issues and needs of relative caregivers for children in your county and state.

**2** Memorize at least three kinship statistics, including the number of children raised by relatives in your county and state, grandparents raising grandchildren and children raised by relatives in the counties of legislators on committees for children and families.

Legislators always want to have statistics to back up a need or issue. Knowing the statistics in their multiple counties is always a powerful testimony that will allow them to identify with issues directly from residents in their county. Kinship statistics can be found on the U.S. 2000 Census Bureau website and in the center's *Michigan Kinship Data Booklet*. Please call toll-free **1-800-535-1218** or e-mail **kinship@msu.edu** to ask for your copy.

**3** Form a legislative task force group. Have a plan and a goal.

Create a legislative task force group that meets at a convenient time and date for the group. Your legislative group should not be large and can include at least two kinship caregivers, lawyers, kinship service providers, personnel from lobbyist agencies, and other appropriate social service personnel.

**4** Form a relationship with your legislators.

Know your state legislator and introduce yourself by phone or e-mail and try to meet him or her at least twice in person. Contact information for your legislator can be found on the state legislative website: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/>.

To find legislators in your county, call:

For Senators:

Secretary of the Senate, (517) 373-2400

For Representatives in the House:

House Clerk, (517) 373-0135

The ***Citizen's Guide to State Government***

includes the current legislators in the Senate and House and information about Michigan's government system. Find this guide at:

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/citizensguide.pdf>

Form relationships with legislators assigned to committees such as human services, family services, and senior citizens services. It is also important to form relationships with democratic and republican legislators from the House of Representatives and the Senate. When meeting with legislators, keep your meeting short (15 minutes) and straight to the point. Be professional and do not attack. Always emphasize the importance of family preservation, stability, and permanency for children and how keeping children in families will support the goal of the state and Department of Human Services in reducing the number of children placed in out-of-home care such as foster care.

**5** Understand how the legislative process works for how bills become laws and your state's appropriations process. You can always ask these questions by calling your local legislator's office.

**6** Attend legislative committee and appropriations meetings at the capitol for the Department of Human Services and child and family services.

Meet the committee members individually before the appropriations and committee meetings and discuss the needs of kinship care. Ask for their support and names of others they suggest you contact for additional support. Legislators want to know their colleagues support similar issues. Meeting them individually will also make you more comfortable during public testimony at committee meetings.

**7** Be consistent and don't give up! Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day.

With knowledge, consistency, and determination, your voice will eventually be heard and change will begin. Legislators do have compassion for children and family preservation needs. For more information about advocacy strategies, please contact the Kinship Care Resource Center toll-free at **1-800-535-1218** or through e-mail at **kinship@msu.edu** or contact Michigan's Children at (517) 485-3500 or by e-mail at **info@michiganschildren.org**.

# Bill would help nontraditional families

## *Relatives find themselves becoming parents – again*

By Kevin Grasha • Reprinted from the *Lansing State Journal* • 8/30/2005

### News Article

*“...Keeping kids with relatives would save money in the long run.  
And more importantly: it would save lives.”*

*—State Senator Irma Clark-Coleman, D-Detroit*

Two years ago, Bev and Tom Powell, both in their late 50s, became parents again. The DeWitt couple took in three grandchildren. They represent the kind of nontraditional family that some say is becoming more common – people raising their relatives’ children. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins are increasingly raising second families because parents have substance abuse problems, are in jail, are too poor to raise the children themselves, or simply don’t want to do it. Advocates for kinship families are trying to get a bill passed by the Legislature that would financially help people who raise their relatives’ children. Twenty-one states have similar laws. Now a foster parent raising a child 13 to 18 years old gets almost \$500 a month, while a grandparent or other relative raising that same child gets about \$100, said Ama Agyemang, coordinator for Michigan State University’s Kinship Care Resource Center. “Why not support families instead of putting kids in foster care?” Agyemang said.

State Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman, D-Detroit, and State Rep. Michael Murphy, D-Lansing, have introduced legislation in the Senate and House that would increase payments for relatives raising children to about two-thirds of the rate currently paid to licensed foster homes. Clark-Coleman, who has been working on this issue for about five years and has seen several kinship bills stall, said keeping kids with relatives would save money in the long run. And more importantly: It would save lives. “They would have far less problems

with kids running away and getting in trouble,” she said. Clark-Coleman isn’t concerned about funding; she said the Department of Human Services could reallocate the money. But she admitted that fiscal concerns could be hindering her efforts.

#### **Second-time parents**

In Michigan, more than 183,000 children live with relatives other than their biological parents. And more than 70,000 grandparents care for grandchildren under the age of 18, according to the Kinship Care Resource Center. Many find themselves in parenting roles a second time. “Now we’re paying for baby sitters, day care, things you don’t expect to do when you’re a grandparent,” Bev Powell said. “Trying to get everything done and be there for them – it’s hard.” The Powells took guardianship of the children after their father, Tom’s son, said he couldn’t take care of them. At one point, he said he would have to put the children up for adoption. At the time, the son was in the Air Force, stationed in Tokyo and was being deployed to South Korea. The children’s mother, who lived in Japan, couldn’t take care of them either, he told them. “Of course, we weren’t going to have them live with some stranger,” Bev Powell said. The Powells were supposed to take care of the children temporarily. About a year later, Tom’s son married another woman, had a child with her and, Bev said, “when the time came to take them back, he didn’t want them.” The Powells then applied for guardianship.

#### **Financial pressures**

The Powells are fortunate. Although Bev has retired, Tom Powell still works as a civil engineer and said he scrapped plans to retire in a few years. But many others live on fixed incomes, relying on Social Security checks. Carrie Hattaway, 33, and her husband are raising five of their own children and took guardianship of Carrie’s 5-year-old nephew last year when her brother said he couldn’t handle raising him. In addition to having severe behavioral problems and developmental delays, the boy has cerebral palsy. Hattaway said he has tried to kick out the windows of her car and broke two televisions, but she said she can’t imagine sending him to foster care. “If I can’t do it, who would?” she said of caring for the boy.

#### **‘Single great-grandma’**

Ethel Artis of Lansing, a self-described “single great-grandma,” has been raising four of her great-grandchildren for about six years. The kids range in age from 6 months to 8 years. Their mother is struggling with drug addiction and their grandmother, who has multiple sclerosis, can’t care for them. So the 65-year-old Artis, a retired General Motors Corp. employee, stepped in. She became a foster parent in 2001, and said the \$48 every two weeks she got per child went up to about \$370. Before that, she wasn’t sure she could afford diapers, clothes or food. But at the same time, she didn’t want them in the foster care system, being raised by strangers. “I’d move to a warmer state and live in a box car, if it came to that,” she said. “It gives me the shivers thinking about foster care.”

# Books for Kinship Families and Support Group Coordinators

Prices from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) • These prices may vary or change.

## Children in Kinship Care

- ◆ A Kinship Guide to Rescuing Children by Helene LaBrecque Ellis, (517) 256-3277, \$8.47-\$16.95
- ◆ All Kinds of Families by Norma Simon, \$10.85
- ◆ An Elephant in the Living Room: A Children's Book by Jill M. Hastings, \$10.36
- ◆ Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights by Julie Nelson and Mary Gallagher, \$9.95
- ◆ Finding the Right Spot: When Kids Can't Live with Their Parents by Janice Levy, \$8.95
- ◆ Let's Talk About Living with a Grandparent by Susan Kent, \$21.25
- ◆ Mama Bear Baby Bear by Linda Silvas, \$23.00
- ◆ Robert Lives with his Grandparents by Martha Whitmore Hickman, \$12.44
- ◆ The Family Book by Todd Parr, \$10.87
- ◆ We Belong Together: A Book about Adoption and Families by Todd Parr, \$10.87
- ◆ Who's in a Family? by Robert Skutch, \$7.95

## Caregivers for Children

- ◆ Grandparenting in a Changing World by Eda J. LeShan, \$11.95
- ◆ Grandparenting with Love and Logic Practical Solutions for Today's Grandparenting Challenges by Jim Fay, \$10.85
- ◆ Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family by Sylvie de Toledo and Deborah Edler Brown, \$12.21
- ◆ Great Ideas for Grandkids: 150 Ways to Entertain, Educate, and Enjoy Your Grandchildren – Without Setting Foot in a Toy Store by Peggy Epstein, \$8.76
- ◆ Helping Children Cope with Change and Loss by Rosemary Wells, \$10.95
- ◆ How to Talk to Your Kids About Really Important Things: Specific Questions and Answers and Useful Things to Say by Charles E. Schaefer, \$19.95

- ◆ Raising Our Children's Children by Deborah Doucette-Dudman, \$11.01
- ◆ Second Time Around: Help For Grandparents Who Raise Their Children's Children by Joan Callander, \$6.49
- ◆ The Grandparent Guide: The Definitive Guide to Coping with the Challenges of Modern Grandparenting by Arthur Kornhaber, \$20.00
- ◆ Ticklebelly Hill: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren by Hilda Osborne, \$11.45
- ◆ To Grandma's House We Stay: When You Have to Stop Spoiling Your Grandchildren and Start Raising Them by Sally Houtman, \$16.95

## Professionals

- ◆ 104 Activities that Build: Self-esteem, Teamwork, Communication, Anger Management, Self-discovery, and Coping Skills by Alanna Jones, \$18.82
- ◆ Breaking the Cycle of Hurtful Family Experiences by Robert S. McGee, \$14.30
- ◆ Creating Positive Support Groups for Children at Risk by Susan T. Dennison, \$52.21
- ◆ Curriculum Guides for Kinship Support Groups by Second Time Around: Family and Consumer's Sciences, College of Education, Western Michigan University, (269) 387-3704, \$50.00-\$75.00
- ◆ Effective Support Groups by James E. Miller, \$6.95
- ◆ Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren by B. Carole Cox, \$41.00
- ◆ Health Online: How to Find Health Info, Support Groups, and Self-help Communities in Cyber Space by Tom Ferguson, \$20.60
- ◆ How to Lead Small Groups by Neal F. McBride, \$9.00
- ◆ Kinship Care: Making the Most of a Valuable Resource by Rob Green, \$29.5
- ◆ Support Groups for Children by Kathle O'Rourke, \$52.95
- ◆ Working with Custodial Grandparents by Bert Hayslip, \$48.95



# ***Donating to Kinship Care***

**Donations to the Kinship Care Resource Center are tax-deductible.  
Your generosity allows us to provide resources and support  
to Kinship Care families in Michigan.**



You can make your check payable to:

**Michigan State University**  
School of Social Work  
Kinship Care Resource Center  
254 Baker Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824

# Department of Human Services

## Local County Offices

The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides the maximum financial assistance for children in kinship care. Call your local DHS and ask for services and resources.

### **www.michigan.gov**

Alcona: (989) 724-2100  
Alger: (906) 387-4440  
Allegan: (269) 673-7700  
Alpena: (989) 354-7200  
Antrim: (231) 533-8664  
Arenac: (989) 846-5500

Baraga: (906) 353-4700  
Barry: (269) 948-3200  
Bay: (989) 895-2100  
Benzie: (231) 882-1330  
Berrien: (269) 934-2000  
Branch: (517) 279-4200

Calhoun: (269) 966-1284  
Cass: (269) 445-0200  
Charlevoix: (231) 348-1600  
Cheboygan: (231) 627-8500  
Chippewa: (906) 635-4100  
Clare: (989) 539-4260  
Clinton: (989) 224-5500  
Crawford: (989) 348-7691

Delta: (906) 786-5394  
Dickinson: (906) 774-1484

Eaton: (517) 543-0860  
Emmet: (231) 348-1600

Genesee: (810) 760-2200  
Gladwin: (989) 426-3300  
Gogebic: (906) 663-6200  
Grand Traverse:  
(231) 941-3900  
Gratiot: (989) 875-5181

Hillsdale: (517) 439-2200  
Houghton: (906) 482-0500  
Huron: (989) 269-9201

Ingham: (517) 887-9400  
Ionia: (616) 527-5200  
Iosco: (989) 362-0300  
Iron: (906) 265-9958  
Isabella: (989) 772-8400

Jackson: (517) 780-7400

Kalamazoo: (269) 337-4900  
Kalkaska: (231) 258-1200  
Kent: (616) 247-6000  
Keweenaw: (906) 337-3302

Lake: (231) 745-8159  
Lapeer: (810) 667-0800  
Leelanau: (231) 941-3900  
Lenawee: (517) 264-6300  
Livingston: (517) 548-0200  
Luce: (906) 293-5144

Mackinac: (906) 643-9550  
Macomb: (586) 412-6100  
Manistee: (231) 723-8375  
Marquette: (906) 228-9691  
Mason: (231) 845-7391  
Mecosta: (231) 796-4300  
Menominee: (906) 863-9965  
Midland: (989) 835-7040  
Missaukee: (231) 779-4500  
Monroe: (734) 243-7200  
Montcalm: (989) 831-8400  
Montmorency:  
(989) 785-4218  
Muskegon: (231) 733-3700

Newaygo: (231) 689-5500

Oakland: (248) 975-4800  
Oceana: (231) 873-7251  
Ogemaw: (989) 345-5135  
Ontonagon: (906) 884-4951  
Osceola: (231) 796-4300  
Oscoda: (989) 826-4000  
Otsego: (989) 732-1702  
Ottawa: (616) 394-7200

Presque Isle: (989) 734-2108

Roscommon: (989) 275-5107

Saginaw: (989) 758-1500  
St. Clair: (810) 966-2000  
St. Joseph: (269) 467-1200  
Sanilac: (810) 648 4420  
Schoolcraft: (906) 341-2114  
Shiawassee: (989) 725-3200

Tuscola: (989) 673-9100

VanBuren: (269) 621-2800

Washtenaw: (734) 481-2000  
Wayne: (313) 456-1000  
Wexford: (231) 779-4500

# ***Kinship Care Resource Center Thanks Coalition and Task Force***

## **Kinship Care Resource Center Coalition**

The Kinship Coalition includes members of social service agencies who meet quarterly in Ingham County to discuss, create, and implement community projects to aid kinship families in Michigan. To join the coalition, please contact the center. Coalition members currently are:

Joseph Kozakiewicz, Chance at Childhood Law and Social Work Clinic, Michigan State University, East Lansing  
Connie Norman, Michigan Department of Human Services, Lansing  
Nancy Weber, Tri-County Office on Aging, Lansing  
Deb Hill, CACS Head Start, Lansing  
Regina Allen, Social Security Administration, Lansing  
Bill Morris, Lansing Community College, Lansing  
Janet Clark, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Lansing  
Ronda Rucker and Joyce Nickel, Eaton County Strong Families-Safe Children  
Helen Ellis, author of "A Kinship Guide to Rescuing Children"  
Tracey Vincent, Michigan Developmental Disability Council  
Karen Hoene, Early On  
David Gruber, Dispute Resolution Center  
Ama Agyemang, Kinship Care Resource Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing

## **Kinship Legislative Task Force**

The Kinship Legislative Task Force includes members of social service agencies who meet periodically to discuss and educate the community about bills and policies affecting kinship families in Michigan. The Legislative Task Force has been instrumental in the first drafting of the subsidized guardianship bill (SB 170, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>). This bill would provide kinship families with guardianship of the children in their care with a monthly stipend. To join the task force, please contact the center. Current task force members are:

Joseph Kozakiewicz, Chance at Childhood Law and Social Work Clinic, Michigan State University, East Lansing  
Delanie Pope, Chance at Childhood Law and Social Work Clinic, Michigan State University, East Lansing  
Kimberly Steed, Chance at Childhood Law and Social Work Clinic, Michigan State University, East Lansing  
Anglique Day, Michigan's Children, Lansing  
Michele Corey, Michigan's Children, Lansing  
Martha Kaiser, Attorney  
Bill Long, Attorney  
Krys O'Brien, Clinton County Juvenile Court  
Joyce Stout, Second Time Around, Kalamazoo  
Jill Olsen, Calhoun County Juvenile Court  
Virginia Boyce, Grandparents as Parents Program (GAP), Ann Arbor  
Josh Hartmen, Grandparents as Parents Program (GAP), Ann Arbor  
Melodi Valvano, Kinship Support Services, Saginaw  
Jane Sanderson, Hillsdale Senior County Center  
Crystal White, Project Guide, Detroit  
Ama Agyemang, Kinship Care Resource Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing

# RELATIVES RAISING RELATIVES' CHILDREN



For more information, contact the:

Michigan State University  
School of Social Work  
**Kinship Care Resource Center**  
254 Baker Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824

**Toll-free 1-800-535-1218**

[kinship@msu.edu](mailto:kinship@msu.edu)

[www.kinship.msu.edu](http://www.kinship.msu.edu)

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